

Role of Gender on Perceived Stress and Loneliness in Elder People

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the influence of gender on the level of stress and the level of loneliness in elder men and women. Studying these psychosocial elements, and being aware of them can help them cope with their daily lives and maintain their subjective well-being. As per the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 200 (100 men and 100 women) community-dwelling elderly people between the ages of 60 and 80 years were selected from different areas of Patna city. Psychological measures, the Perceived Loneliness Scale by Jha P.K. (1997) and the Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen S. (1994) were used to assess the degree of perceived loneliness and stress. Statistical research analysis indicates that female elderly individuals have higher levels of perceived stress and loneliness than male elderly people.

Keywords: Male Elderly people, Female Elderly People Perceived Stress, Perceived Loneliness.

Introduction:

Ageing is a natural process. Aging affects everyone equally, physically and mentally. Ageing is the process by which the biological, psychological and social development of an individual gradually changes. In today's modern era, social disintegration is taking place, and changes in family structure are taking place very rapidly. The increasing proportion of elderly persons in developed and developing countries is giving rise to new health concerns in the twenty-first century. As people grow old, they are more likely to develop physical and mental illnesses. Loneliness and perceived stress are the most common mental disorders in elder persons, with estimated rates ranging from 10% to 65%.

The elderly face a multiplicity of problems, including physical health concerns and financial difficulties. The most common apprehensions among the elderly are feelings of neglect and lack of importance in the family, as well as environmental problems (Alokiyasamy et al., 2012).

According to today's demographic studies and available data, there are 962 million elderly people worldwide aged 60 years and above and this number is projected to reach 2.1 billion by 2050 (World Health

Organization, 2002). According to a report published in partnership with HelpAge India International and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFP), the number of senior citizens in India is expected to increase from one hundred million to three hundred million by 2050, representing 20% of the total population. According to the 2011 census, there are 104 million Indians over the age of 60, representing 8.6% of the total population. According to the Registrar General of India, the share of the population over the age of 65 will increase from 6.9% in 2001 to 12.4% by 2026. (Federal Highway Safety Administration)

Loneliness and Perceived Stress in the Elderly Population

In today's modern times when the way of living in the world is changing very rapidly, there are many definitions of loneliness, but they all describe it as an unpleasant, distressing subjective experience caused by a lack of social bonds with others (Peplau and Perlman 1982). According to Gierveld et al. (2006), Zimmerman produced the earliest recorded description of loneliness between 1785 and 1786.

People of all ages feel lonely. However, it seems that the elderly and adolescents are the populations most vulnerable to loneliness, and this can have many different causes (Donaldson & Watson, 1996). Loneliness is associated with ageing. This is due to a reduction in social networks due to the loss of friends and partners. Victor et al. (2005) estimate that up to one-third of the elderly population experience loneliness at some point.

Much qualitative research has focused on how elderly people deal with loneliness and how they understand it. In a survey conducted by Pettigrew and Roberts (2008), the majority of elder adults reported feeling lonely and viewed it as a concern. Perceived stress, a stimulus-response relationship, refers to a person's state of mind or emotion when they feel that "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual can mobilize." Folkman and Lazarus (1980).

Trouillet et al. (2009) studied the diversity of perspectives on stress and ageing. The researchers attempted to determine whether age has an impact on stress. Diehl and Hay (2010) concluded that there is not enough evidence to infer that ageing affects stress. Some academics have concluded that elder people are more adaptable to deal with day-to-day challenges, while other experts have found that younger people are more resilient to such stressors. There was no consensus on the findings of the studies.

Objective of The Study :

This study aims to study the psychosocial components of ageing, specifically how gender as a factor influences loneliness and perceived stress.

Method :

SAMPLE: The study was conducted on a random cum purposive sample of 200 (100 males and 100 females) community-dwelling elderly people in the age group of 60 to 85 years from different areas of Patna Municipal Corporation.

Research Tools:

Personal Data Sheet

It is a self-made semi-structured proforma designed by the researcher specifically for this study. It contains information about socio-demographic variables such as age, sex, religion, education, marital status, residence and occupation.

Perceived Loneliness Scale by Jha P.K. (1997)

The 36-item Perceived Loneliness scale was created by Praveen Kumar Jha (1997) as a unidimensional self-report research tool that offers a thorough evaluation of a person. Five points were to be awarded for the goods. An individual can receive a minimum of 36 and a maximum of 180. The reliability of the loneliness scale is largely satisfactory. It was discovered that these reliabilities were, respectively, 0.84 and 0.82.

Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen S. (1994).

The Perceived Stress Scale, was developed by Sheldon Cohen and associates. This is the most widely used psychological tool for evaluating stress perception is the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). It measures how demanding people think their lives are to be. Items were designed to establish how erratic, chaotic, and overloaded respondents' lives are. Questions about feelings and ideas from the preceding month are asked on the Perceived Stress Scale. Respondents are asked how often they felt a certain way in each circumstance.

Procedure :

For this study, 200 elderly people (100 men and 100 women) aged above 60 years and below 85 years were purposively selected from various areas of Patna Municipal Area and lived with their family members. The study excluded participants who were seriously unwell, disabled or suffering from mental conditions or were unavailable for any reason. The samples were assessed individually using self-developed socio-demographic scales of subjective stress and loneliness.

Results :

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

In order, to see both the groups were similar in terms of socio-demographic details or not. A chi-square test was used to compare the results of Group 1 (Female Elderly people) with Group 2 (Male Elderly people). Results show that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups for the majority of socio-demographic factors, including age, education level, relationship status,

religious belief, category belongingness, type of family, and number of children. However, there was a statistically significant difference for variables related to residence, sibling count, and birth order.

Table 1 reveals significant differences between Group 1 (Female elderly) and Group 2 (Male Elderly) in terms of experienced loneliness ($t = 14.34, p < .001$) and perceived stress ($t = 6.22, p < .05$).

Table- 1

Comparison of Perceived Loneliness scale between Group 1 (Female Elderly people) and Group 2 (Male Elderly people)

Areas of assessment	Group 1 (Mean \pm SD)	Group 2 (Mean \pm SD)	t value	P
Perceived Loneliness	131.61 \pm 16.42	103.21 \pm 9.88	14.34	.000
Perceived Stress	17.09 \pm 4.91	12.43 \pm 5.96	6.22	.036

Discussion :

The present study used a cross-sectional design and quantitative. Cross-sectional design is the most common, prevalent and objective method to assess the effect of psychological factors. The study sample comprised 200 (two hundred) senior citizens, who lived in Patna Municipal Town and were aged between 60 and 85. This study used the chi-square test and t-test to assess whether the socio-demographic characteristics of the two groups were similar. The chi-square test and t-test were used to evaluate both Group 1 (elderly women) and Group 2 (elderly men). Most of the socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, place of residence, religion and family structure were found to be statistically insignificant between the two groups.

Role of gender on Elder People perceived loneliness and Perceived Stress

The findings of the present statistical investigation shown in Table 1 revealed significant differences in the scale of felt loneliness between Group 1 (female elderly) and Group 2 (male elderly) ($t = 14.34, p < .001$).

Similar findings have emerged from a study conducted by Desai et al. in 2016, in which they found

that elderly Indian women experience higher levels of loneliness. According to Pagan, R. (2020), women are more likely to experience loneliness than men. Similar findings were also observed by Corporal et al. (2008) and Pinquart and Sorensen (2001).

Table 1 of the findings shows a statistically significant difference in the perceived stress scale ($t = 6.22, p < .001$) between Group 1 (female elders) and Group 2 (male elders). These findings are confirmed by research conducted by (Sacco et al., 2013), which showed that women have higher levels of perceived stress than men. Several investigations (Zhang et al., 2014; Osmanovic-Thunstrom et al., 2015; Pettigrew and Roberts, 2008) have validated the findings of this study.

Conclusion :

This study revealed that female elder adults have higher levels of loneliness and stress than male elder adults. Various categories of psychological measures indicate that male elder adults have better psychosocial health than female elder adults. The present study concludes that gender has a substantial impact on the psychological well-being of elder adults.

The study's observations and findings can be used to better understand senior people's needs and devise a plan of action. The study looked at the characteristics of participants in a specific area of Patna district in the Indian state of Bihar. It can be difficult to extrapolate the study's results.

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